

THE NEW MEANING  
OF AN OLD CREED

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J. DELMAN KUYKENDALL

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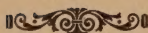




# THE NEW MEANING OF AN OLD CREED

A Study of the Apostles' Creed  
in terms of Modern  
Thought

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By

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TO MY WIFE

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## PREFACE

This discussion of the Apostles' Creed is based on a series of sermons preached in Plymouth Church, during the season of 1923. These sermons were heard by a congregation representing nearly all denominations, gathered from all parts of the United States. It is on the urging of many of these hearers, —thinking people who are concerned with the present religious developments—that the publication of a rather brief resume of the sermons is undertaken.

I have been particularly happy to know that the sermons themselves brought new light and encouragement to many questioning souls. I can only hope that the suggestions contained in this little book may be helpful to many others.

J. DELMAN KUYKENDALL



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## CHAPTER I

### Introductory

Until very recently a discussion of any religious creed would have been inexcusable. The statements of faith of the churches were rapidly becoming more honored in the breach than in the observance. Ministers mumbled them with mental reservations and laymen repeated them by rote without any thought as to their meaning. The gospel resting on credal statements was being largely forgotten, while the gospel of deeds was gripping the souls of men and being incorporated into life.

A new situation has arisen as a result of the implacable campaign on behalf of literalism in Biblical interpretation which has been, and is now being carried on by some very able leaders of the conservative school of theology. The crusade has gone far beyond the limits of calm and reasonable debate. It has been made personal, and in many cases has become vindictive in its spirit. It has largely centered about a few personalities, but has been presented in such a manner as to offer a challenge to all thinking people.

It is not now possible to evade the issue. The

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world is being told that no one can inquire into the absolute accuracy of every statement of the Bible, as commonly interpreted in the ancient creeds, without thereby ruling himself out of consideration as a Christian. The battle line is drawn, not by the liberal Christians, but by the conservatives. Either the men against whom the shafts of ridicule and contempt have been hurled are Christians or they are perverters of the faith. If they are Christians they are better Christians than are their accusers, for they have displayed more Christliness in their lives.

If these leaders of liberal thought are not Christians, then Christianity rests absolutely upon a stated creed, and an infallible Bible, and being a Christian involves the abrogation of every utterance of science, since science began to investigate the universe. If Christianity means mental allegiance, without reservation or the right of interpretation, to the ancient creeds there are millions of people who can never be Christians.

In view of this situation it may not be amiss to examine one of these ancient statements of faith, to see whether there may be brought out of it a few fundamental religious facts, which are not antagonistic to modern knowledge. There can be nothing in such a discussion which will alter the attitude of the rigid conservatives. There may be something helpful and encouraging to those who have felt them-

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selves thrust out of the company of Christians, and who have not themselves found the essential harmony which exists between all the revelations which God has made of himself.

Of course the few liberal ministers who have been singled out for attack do not stand alone. They represent the thought of millions of other people. Their opinions are not new or strange. These ideas which have aroused such bitter opposition have been expressed, in somewhat less startling manner perhaps, but none the less certainly, from a thousand other pulpits. Hardly a religious book of the past dozen years has not taken for granted the right to study the Bible critically. If all the educated ministers had been utterly honest in their presentation of truth the whole religious world would have been permeated with the new spirit, and the attacks of the Fundamentalists would have completely failed.

As the case stands, however, the pews are filled with laymen who cling persistently to the old slogans, because they believe their leaders support these slogans. This would not be the case if so many of the pulpits were not filled by men who fear to give expression to what they themselves fully believe and accept. This fear is not always due to a lack of courage. It is more frequently based on a feeling that the pew is not ready to follow all the way, and that real damage to the lives of the members of the congrega-

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tions would come from the presentation of any idea which would tend to shake faith in the ancient beliefs.

As a result of this fear many of the best people in the churches are going far beyond the point which the supposed leaders occupy, and in a tragically large number of cases are becoming indifferent to the claims of organized Christianity. These thinking people are not losing their religion, but they are not expressing it through the church, where it should be expressed, and they are not as happy in their religious life as they would be if they did not have a feeling that they are slightly heretical. Everyone likes to be orthodox, but there are many people today who are not willing to be orthodox if it means abrogating their reason.

The purpose of this series of discussions is to demonstrate the orthodoxy of those who have been branded as heretics. The Apostles' Creed, the most ancient of the creeds, will be studied, item by item. It will be studied in the light of modern knowledge, and an interpretation of its statements will be sought which will make it possible to use such of it as can be preserved, not as a test of Christianity, but as a statement of the few fundamental facts of religion.

In common with a great many other people I do not believe in creeds,—written creeds, to which ministers and laymen must subscribe before they are per-

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mitted to call themselves Christians. No creed can represent the exact belief of any number of people of intelligence. No creed is understood in exactly the same way by any considerable number of people. Any creed which is to have validity at any particular time must grow out of such knowledge as is available when it is made, and as knowledge grows the creed must change or be outgrown. If the right of private interpretation is granted when the creed is imposed it loses its force as a creed, and if such right of interpretation is not granted it becomes either an intellectual shackle or a lie.

A creed as an attempt to state in a general way fundamental truth has value and may be received by intelligent people if it is not imposed on them as a test. Even the ancient creeds are fine documents of religion, but only become and remain such as they are interpreted and understood in the light of advancing knowledge.

The creeds, and not the ministers are on trial today and it is fair to subject them to the most rigid examination. They have had their free way in religion in the past but they have come on a time when they are no longer sacrosanct. One thing is certain as a result of the present controversy. The time is here when the creeds must be abandoned as gateways through which anyone shall be compelled to pass in order to enter the fellowship of the church. Further,



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if they cannot be so interpreted as to represent the religious knowledge of the present day they must be absolutely abandoned as having any legitimate place in the Christian system. Believing that the creeds may be so amended and interpreted as to retain great religious value this study of the Apostles' Creed is undertaken with the very earnest purpose of seeking to establish that possible value. This creed is too old a friend to be cast aside, though it may be necessary to reclothe it, in order that it may move in the intellectual society of today.

## CHAPTER II

### I Believe

Christianity is the only system of religion which has creeds. This is probably due to the fact that it is the only religion which has prevailed among people who are accustomed to question, to inquire, to doubt. The followers of Mohammed and Confucius and Buddha are not scientifically inclined. They accept authority in intellectual and spiritual concerns. The Greeks and Romans speculated, but they did not question the universe. They were philosophers, not scientists. Never having seriously doubted, these people have never found it important to say, "I believe." This fact suggests the theme of this study.

Having assumed the necessity of denying the validity of the creed as a test of the religious life, it is necessary to qualify that denial by saying that the words, "I believe," constitute the foundation of civilization. This is obvious to anyone who knows anything of life. Humanity cannot live without creeds. Nations cannot function without creeds. Social or religious groups cannot perform the activities rightly expected of them without creeds. Individual life can

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achieve nothing without creeds. Humankind is in desperate straits today because it has not a creed, a faith, expressing itself in a common life. The whole individual life, the whole social organism rest upon belief, upon faith, for there is no positive knowledge unchanging, unchangeable and absolute.

All creeds, except in religion, have developed and are constantly developing—they are in a continual state of flux. Only in religion, and today only by a particular group of religionists, is it considered a merit to cling to an unchanging creed. All other creeds are composites, growing out of experience,—a kind of unwritten constitution, flexible, amendable by general consent, as new knowledge seems to demand change. This sort of creed is not a barricade against doubt. It is not a bludgeon to compel intellectual servility. It is not a refuge for the mentally and spiritually lazy.

In undertaking to seek out the value which may lie in the creed we shall offer a few suggestions as to the source and purpose of belief, and apply them to one of the universal beliefs of humanity, which underlies all religions, which must underlie all life—the belief in God.

No one has ever profoundly believed who has not doubted. David Hume, in one of his essays, speaks of the philosophy of skepticism. The phrase is full of meaning. No thinking person accepts a

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statement without questioning. In the mind, as in the body, mastication must precede digestion. The real purpose of doubt is not to destroy faith, but to confirm it. Everyone desires to build for his life a foundation structure of affirmations, but the affirmative attitude, if it is intelligent, is preceded by the negative. The bolting of intellectual food produces mental indigestion—which has been the trouble with too much of the religion of the past. Creeds have been swallowed without being chewed.

Belief is necessarily based, in some measure at least, upon a keen, intuitive conviction of truth. Absolute truth does not exist. We naturally assume when we retire at night, that the sun will rise in the morning. It is perhaps just as reasonable to assume that it will not, but when we hear the statement that the sun will rise there is an intuitive response of assent to that statement. It strikes fire in the mind. If the statement were to be made that the sun would not rise for a week our minds would not respond in assent. It does not sound true, and it would be hard to convince anyone who has lived through a number of days that it is true. Our intuitions do not respond to such a statement. It has the sound of pewter instead of the ring of silver.

The reason for this is found in the fact that intuition and reason rest largely on experience. Hume declares that all reasonings concerning matters of fact

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seem to be founded on the relation of cause and effect. We expect that something will happen because something has happened. If a being with reasoning power, but without experience were to be brought here, into the light of an unclouded day, he would assume, if he thought of it at all, that light is the sole condition here. With the falling of night he would be perturbed, but he would as yet hardly reason that the darkness which had come would be temporary. He would conclude that the light had fled, to be gone forever. He would undertake to adjust his life to the condition of darkness. The coming of the morning light would bring to him the first glimmer of an intuition about light and darkness. He would begin to wonder whether the same cycle would repeat itself, and he would doubt. His doubt would begin to disappear when darkness came again, and when a week of days and nights had passed he would find himself possessed of a creed regarding this particular phenomenon.

This particular creed has passed into certainty to such an extent that all human life is ordered according to the belief that the sun will rise and set according to a fixed rule. To anyone except the astronomer there is no reason for believing this, except for the intuition which rests upon age-long experience. The sun has always acted this way and it is easy to believe that it will continue to so act.

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If a savage and a civilized man were to come suddenly upon an aeroplane in a desert the mental effect upon the two would be totally different. The machine would mean little to the savage. He might very easily assume it to be some kind of animal or tree which he had not previously seen. He might fear it, for his intuitions would lead him to fear that which was strange. He might, indeed, fall down and worship it, associating it with some of the strange powers of nature.

The civilized man would at once assume that another man had been in the desert. This would be an entirely reasonable assumption, resting upon an intuitive conviction which in turn rests upon experience. In all his life he had never known an aeroplane which was not made by man and operated by man. Conditions might lead to a doubt that it had ever been possible for a man to have gotten into the desert with an aeroplane, but the doubt would quickly disappear in the face of the remembered experience of the past. The finding of the aeroplane would be no conclusive proof that a man had been present at this spot. The machine might have been driven here by the wind, without a pilot at its helm. In fact, the thing which seems to be an aeroplane might be something else, not made by human hands at all.

In spite of questionings and doubts, however, the conviction would remain, and would formulate

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itself into a creed that this was a human-made machine, brought to the desert by a man. Following this conclusion other speculations would follow. Tentative creeds would be formulated as to the reason for bringing the machine to the desert, and as to the possible fate of the man who had brought it. These theories would not have so much experience back of them, but by constant repetition they might in time come to have a place in the creed of the man and the machine. In some such way as this complicated creeds have grown up, containing fundamental truth, but including also much of error. It is a thrilling thing to find a new belief, which strikes a response in intuition and reason. It is a depressing thing to allow that belief to become a set theory which neither reason nor advancing knowledge can alter or amend.

As we go on through life, unless we permit our ideas to solidify, we are likely to come to a greater daring in belief. Widening knowledge, resting on broader experience, brings greater power to grasp probable truth, a quicker intuition, a firmer confidence in venturing into the unknown. The first men probably ate few varieties of food. It is not so long ago, in fact, that the tomato was considered unsafe as a food. Today we hesitate at almost nothing which appears to us to be at all suitable for consumption. Experience has taught us to discern the good from the bad, and we have ventured forth into many



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culinary delights which were forbidden to those of more limited faith.

Business shows a venturesome faith, a daring in belief, that was unknown only a few years ago. Science is becoming increasingly confident of itself. In every element of life the present is marked by an expanding of the creeds upon which we rest. Only in religion are there those who would say that we dare not venture out beyond the limits fixed in an age of limited knowledge and limited experience.

In religion there are some beliefs which are fundamental. There are many others which have grown up as theories, but which by much repetition have come to be held important, although they are not supported by any great amount of evidence growing out of knowledge or experience, and although they do not strike fire in the minds of people as they formerly did. The one belief which is essential to religion is that there is a God. Religion is the relationship between God and man and if there is no God, or if there is no belief in God, there can be no religion.

Ideas about God differ, but a belief in God is almost universal. There is no way to know how the idea first arose, but it is probably safe to assume that it came first out of a question. This may not have taken the form of a positive doubt, for there had been no statement against which doubt could be directed.

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There was, however, a spirit of wonder. When man first became conscious of himself he also became conscious of a world about him. His world was limited compared with what has been revealed since, but to him it was a very great world. It would naturally suggest a question: Here it is, how did it come ?

This question would naturally lead to a dim supposition that it must have been made. This would not be very definite until experience had shown the first man that the special tools and implements which he needed for warfare or for producing a living had to be created. Seeing a tree grow he might accept the idea that this was something that did not need to be made, that somehow came into being without a creator. The greater his experience in life the more he would feel that nothing is which is not created by some other force. He would gradually formulate a creed whose central tenet would be a questioning belief that back of creation is a creator.

The belief in God could not be very well defined at first. There would be resentment at not being able to see the creator, and there would be doubt as to the existence of any hidden power great enough to do this stupendous job. The revelation of hidden powers in nature would tend to overcome the feeling that no great hidden creative power could exist. With a growing knowledge of the universe and a growing experience the first dim suppositions regard-

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ing God would begin to create an intuitive feeling, amounting finally to a firm conviction, that experience could not be false. In the universe the early man would find no effect without a cause. Back of the whole existent universe, then, there must be a cause, and God was born in the human mind.

The first gods were limited in power. They were mere supermen. They had somehow spoken the various elements of the limited universe into being and had been able to do little with it since. They had made the sun and the darkness, they had created the sea and the arching firmament and these had come together somehow into the jumbled world.

Gradually the conception of an intelligence back of all created things grew up. A company of co-operating gods took the place of isolated creators. This company came to have a leader of greater power than any of the others. Finally some notion arose that there must have been one god who had planned and made the world.

About this god there gathered new ideas. The belief of man was coming to a new daring. The monotheistic god of the Hebrews was a great venture in faith. He was a god great enough to make a world, but it was not a very great world which he had made. God was only as great as the universe, and men knew little about the universe. For a long time a very simple belief in god was adequate.

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And then, a few years ago science began to measure the universe, which expanded to infinite proportions. The old god was no longer big enough to explain the new universe. There was needed a god of eternal and infinite intelligence, a planning, toiling, dreaming god. With the growth of knowledge and experience it is becoming easier to believe in this infinite god.

There are still those who cling to the god of the primitive mind. These people find comfort and satisfaction in their creed, which gives them a great superman who six thousand years flung the world into being and has done nothing with it since. They believe in god.

There are others who find no satisfaction in this god. Their experience tells them that he is not great enough to explain the universe which they know. They can more easily believe that the universe made itself than that it was created by an anthropomorphic god such as is implied in the ancient statements of faith, and the old interpretation of scripture. They are able to conceive of a god who has been eternally working, and whose operations go back into the vast reaches of unrecorded time. They can believe in a god who has wrought a constantly enlarging universe out of the fire mist, and who is directing its development toward a well defined plan. They can accept a god who works as man works, and who has

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been making man in his own image by his patient hammering through the aeons. They believe in God.

Here then, is the starting point, the foundation of all religious creeds. What men may believe about the character of God or his methods of creation may differ, but all men everywhere join in the simple fundamental statement of a creed as wide as humanity, "I believe—in God."

Men not only believe in God as an intellectual conception, but they venture forth into life on that belief. They become daring and adventurous as they rest their faith upon the power and upon the good intentions of God. In the words of John Masefield, as they look out upon the troubled sea of life they exclaim,

"I must go down to the seas again,  
To the lonely sea and the sky.  
And all I ask is a tall gray ship,  
And a star to steer her by."

"I believe" is the star by which the tall gray ships of human desire and human achievement have gone to sea. And no other star can safely guide the ship of human destiny.

## CHAPTER III

### God, The Father Almighty

The safe starting point in the search for a common creed which shall include what is fundamental to religion, is the assumption already made that there is an almost universal belief in God,—some kind of God, however crude the conception may be. This is a belief to which almost every human soul is able to "tune in." It strikes fire in the mind. It brings an intuitive conviction of truth. The rudest mind finds God. The most profound intellect finds God. Both savage and philosopher accept this belief as the star by which the tall grey ships of human desire are guided.

It is when we come to definitions of God that the necessity for interpretation arises. The credal statement, "God, the Father Almighty," brings the possibility of a quite marvelous conception of God. It also brings the possibility of a crude and contemptible conception, and unfortunately this has been emphasized in too much of the religious teaching of the past. It is the purpose in this discussion to seek out the rich content in these words which will reveal a God worthy of worship and service.

## GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY

Humanity is eagerly desirous of knowing an intimate God. Man is not greatly interested in an abstract account of a mere creator. Perhaps every child has had the experience of peering into the night sky, seeking to look past the illimitable stars to see if the face of God could not be discerned through the curtains of the dark. We have all felt the keen disappointment at not seeing him, and have sometimes lost faith that he is at all, because we cannot conceive of a God who would hide from his children.

Dr. MacIntosh expresses the universal conviction when he says, "Man is not an animal, simply; even at his worst and lowest he is a fallen kinsman of God." There is no more deep seated belief than this, and in the crudest religions there is somewhere the assertion, "I believe in God, the Father."

Difficulties in the past have arisen in the interpretation of this doctrine because religious thinking has been materialistic. There are millions of people today who have never gotten past the idea that God is a supreme animal. The statement that God created man in his own image contains a tremendous idea, but it has been and is reduced to a joke. It brings the notion that God has two arms and two legs as we have, that he has eyes and ears, and a voice that can thunder denunciations or croon a love song. Our childish minds cannot conceive of God as a spirit. The corollary of this is that we think of man as an



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animal and an animal only. On this basis we seek to find a relationship which does not exist.

Many of the grotesque ideas that have been developed by the cult of spiritism rest on this notion. It grows out of the lack of any ability to think in terms of pure spirit. The reality of spiritual values cannot be established unless they are materialized so they can be seen with our eyes and touched by our hands.

Assuming that God is a spirit, and there can be no other assumption, man must also be a spirit, else there can be no kinship. As a matter of fact man's relationships run in two directions. Physically we are linked with the smallest living animal. This kinship is easy to trace. We can find the thread of life that establishes it. But humanity has characteristics which have no counterpart in purely animal life. If there is no God from whom these have been derived then we are ourselves Gods and the only Gods, unique and unrelated.

It is in the realm of pure spirit, then, that our relationship with God must be found if it is to be found at all. If this is true there is no meaning in much of the Old Testament story of God, except as it may be taken as symbolic. If man is not a spirit God is a myth, for if what we conceive to be spiritual manifestations are but material reactions it is folly to assume that the universe has needed a creator.

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The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God involves the idea of God as a spirit and man as a spirit. Is there any basis for this belief? As a matter of fact all the elements of life that establish human relationships are spiritual elements.

I wish that I could see you, with whom I am communicating. I cannot, nor can you see me. We cannot see each other, we cannot hear each other, we cannot touch each other, though we are standing side by side. We are completely isolated except as we set up spiritual communications which operate through our physical beings. Our bodies are the instruments of our souls and through them we become related to each other. I ask you to clench your hand. I have no physical power to make you do it, but if you are spiritually sympathetic with me, if you have confidence in my purpose, you will follow my request. My will, my soul, will have registered on your will, your soul. We will have entered upon a comradeship.

In all of life the physical is the least of all relationships. I am not reminded of my father when I look in the mirror, although there may be features there reflected which are like the features of his face. I am reminded of him when I find surging up in me some spiritual impulse which was his, some passion, some lofty ideal. When these things come I have companionship with him, even though his body has

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been laid away these many years and I can no longer walk arm in arm with him in the twilight. I am my father's son not because my eyes are blue, but because my soul is true, if it is.

If we could understand what we ourselves are we could readily think of God as the great father spirit. Dr. Lyman Abbott used to tell of talking with his boy about the soul and about God. He touched the lad's forehead and asked, "Are you there?" and the boy replied, "Yes." He touched his knee, "Are you there?" "Yes." He might have gone further. He might have stepped across the room and have asked "Are you here?" and the answer would necessarily have been "Yes." We can understand this better today than ever before, since the radio has opened up a new realm, so suggestive of the spiritual. There is absent-mindedness. The mind wanders away to vast distances. There may be soul absence. The soul may register itself far from the body.

It is hard to think of it clearly, but the spirit cannot be of place or space. It is real, but it is not definable. Such is God. He is an intelligence, a personality, a power. He is not a form sitting on the edge of a cloud. He is everywhere that there is another spirit.

The evidence that we are the children of God lies in the infinite longings and aspirations of the

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soul,—what one has called “The felt immensity of the soul, cabined in a world too small for it.” There is no one who has not felt the thrill of great desires. These are not physical reactions. They belong to man alone, and man alone can be related to the God of aspiration. Through the spirit which communicates with his spirit we think great thoughts and dream great dreams. We can think about the stars because we are God’s children.

On the basis of what we have said, if it is true—and it is true if God is—there are certain deductions which it seems safe to make about God, the Father. If he is so like us and we are so like him he is at least as wise and as good as we are. This statement involves some theories about God which are quite different from those which have been accepted in the past. The creed does not set forth these ideas, but the interpreters of the creed have done so.

In the first place God, the Father, is neither vindictive, nor nonchalant, nor suspicious. Man, at his best, is none of these. Many of the acts and words and thoughts ascribed to God in the Old Testament are false. God did not stop the progress of the sun in order to help his favorite warrior win a battle. God did not send bears to slay some mischievous children who were making fun of a prophet. If God did such things he is simply an ill-natured, vindictive being, unworthy to be the father of men.

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God is not indifferent. He did not casually turn aside for a few days to make a world which ever since has been running itself. He is profoundly interested, else he is not a father. The God who could devise a system of punishment such as has been taught in the past is unworthy of worship. According to that teaching he made a world, gave certain rules for the conduct of men, let them have the power to infringe these rules, and casts them off from him eternally if they do infringe them and do not find the exact formula through which they may be forgiven.

This is not fatherhood. The father does not control the life of his child; he leads it. The real father has no laws and rules. He has lures. He does not live above and apart from the child. He lives with it. He does not seek to remove all the difficulties, to answer all the inquiries, to set aside all the causes of grief and failure. He does not protect the child against every bitter wind and every burning sun. Nor when the child makes a mistake does he cast him off into eternal forgetfulness. He is a companion in the difficulties, a teacher in the midst of the perplexities, a sufferer in all the griefs and failures. He never ceases to be a father. He follows the lost lamb into the farthest fastnesses, and never gives him up. This is fatherhood, and this is the Fatherhood of God. There is no place here for the hell of the old theology.

Judged solely by our best conceptions of human

## GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY

fatherhood, God the Father is deeply concerned about his children. His attitude is one of cooperation, not of compulsion. He is a God of sympathy and love. If he is not this, then these qualities have no meaning in human life, for we have no other way to judge God than on the basis of our own experience. Whittier says:

“The riddle of the world is understood  
Only by him who feels that God is good;  
As only he can feel who makes his love  
The ladder of his faith, and climbs above  
On the rounds of his best instincts; draws no line  
Between mere human goodness and divine,  
But, judging God by what in him is best,  
With a child's trust, leans on a Father's breast.”

It is sometimes hard to accept this idea of God in the face of the circumstances of life. The bitterest cry of the human soul is that which is sometimes wrung from it in some terrific hour of grief or bewilderment, “Why has this happened?” These things happen because God, the Father Almighty in one sense is not almighty.

Such things happen in human life. But they do not disprove human fatherhood. God cannot prevent calamities without destroying the unity of his universe and without taking from man his free will.

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But God can heal the broken heart with the compassion of a great live. He can hold ever before the erring child a lofty ideal. He can restore the shattered purposes and rebuild the wrecked life. He can bestow the oil of a gracious love upon the grief-stricken. He can suffer with his children. And this he does. To think of him otherwise is blasphemy, and yet there are those who would say that God could take away a precious child as punishment for a father's sin!

Dr. Richard LaRue Swain says, "Some people who are always wondering whether God is good to them or whether he thinks of them at all, are greatly shocked if some one else doubts God's existence. Whereas, to believe in Christ's God and at the same time doubt his goodness is flat contradiction." A belief in God that is to have any value necessarily involves a belief in the Fatherhood of God. But the very fact of fatherhood may imply a limitation of power, for there can be no children of God unless he shares his power with them.

While God is thus limited in power over his children by the very fact that they are his children, the God of love and Fatherhood is a greater God than the merely creative God. It is a comparatively simple thing to be able to create. It is not so simple a thing to recreate a spirit, a soul, to rebuild humanity, when humanity has wrongly used the power given by the

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father. But the almighty love of the father will conquer the world,—“not by might nor by power, but by my spirit.”

Human life finds its greatest security and its finest expression through the Fatherhood of God. It is safe to rest upon that, to build life upon it. The infinite love of God will never fail. The greatness of God lies in his love. In that love is security and success. Sidney Lanier sings of it in these melodious words:

“As the marsh hen secretly builds on the watery  
sod,  
Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of  
God;  
I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh hen  
flies  
In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the  
marsh and the skies;  
By so many roots as the marsh grass sends in the  
sod  
I will heartily lay me ahold of the greatness of  
God.”

When the greatness of God finds expression in creative power it may repel. There is nothing to abash the least of his children in the greatness of God when it is expressed in terms of love. He becomes a



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comfortable God, against whom we may snuggle up in the midst of all of the circumstances of life. There is safety and security in fatherhood. We may nest in it and rest in it, and feel the thrill of it as his love responds to our love. "I believe in God, the Father Almighty."

## CHAPTER IV

### Maker of Heaven and Earth

It would seem that logic would have put God, the creator, before God the Father. There is a better logic that puts the Father first, that makes creation the product of a loving intelligence, a benevolent purpose.

The power of God is an expression of the will of God. Every activity grows out of a purpose. The will, the purpose may be found in a study of the activity, of the product of the power. Power may manifest itself in a variety of ways. There is the raging power of the tornado, destructive, unintelligent power. This might have been the power of God. There is a sort of futile power. The will of the breeze seems to be directed to no useful end. Unless controlled it simply "bloweth where it listeth." God might have had this power. There is a vengeful power, the power of the savage. It is intelligent power, but turns only to hurting, not to helping. God might have displayed this power. There is a constructive power, the power of a loving intelligence,

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expressing the will of the father-heart. God might have shown this power.

A limited view of the universe has brought to various people at various times all of these ideas of divine power. It is only lately that men have sought to gain a comprehensive understanding of the universe in a conscious effort to trace back through its phenomena the meaning of God and to know the character of God. Out of some particular phenomenon limited notions of God may arise, and they may contain greatly distorted conceptions. It is only as the universe is understood as a whole that God can be understood.

Science has flung theory after theory into the stream of human thought, and each one has added to the knowledge of the universe. And it has added to the knowledge of God. Most of these theories have been readjusted to fit new-found facts until they have come to be accepted without question. And most of them have been accepted with all their implications regarding religious thought. They have not destroyed religion. They have in every case helped to a clearer understanding of the processes of God. Nothing destructive of belief in God is found today in the Copernican theory of the solar system. There is not an intelligent person today who does not accept without question the strange notion that the sun does not revolve around the earth every twenty-four

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hours, even though all the evidences that reveal themselves to our eyes indicate that the Bible is correct in the statement that the sun rises in the morning, runs its course across the firmament of the heavens, and sets in the west in the evening. "The spacious firmament on high" no longer exists, but that which has taken its place proclaims the gracious creator even more surely.

Just now there is a great hue and cry over the theory of evolution. It is accused of doing a very damnable thing, namely, destroying faith in God. There are some, however, who cannot but believe that it is not the theory of evolution which is destroying faith, but the dogmatic theology which seeks to make men accept as true that which they know to be false.

Opponents of evolution denominate it an hypothesis, a guess. That is exactly what it is, but it is not the first guess, the first hypothesis as to creation. It is the latest and the best supported by evidence. Long before the idea of evolution was stated as a fixed formula there were other guesses. The first of these that has any bearing on religion was the guess that there is a God. That was the original hypothesis of creation. That guess was supported by evidence but not by evidence that could not be supplanted by later and better evidence in support of the same theory. This guess took shape much later in

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the statement of the creed, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

This assertion has never been proven. It may never be proven. But upon this guess rests all religion and every religion. Starting with this guess, which is grounded in the common faith of humanity by reason of an intuitive conviction that it is true, there has always followed an eager desire to know something about God. The only way to know anything about God, except as he reveals himself through spiritual contacts with individual souls, is by a study of what he has done and is doing. There are those now who would say that there must be no further study of the activities of God, if that study leads away from the ancient notions about him and about his methods of creation. In no other way, however, can we come to a full knowledge of him, for this is the way in which theories about God have always arisen.

The first gods were devised to explain isolated natural phenomena. The universe as a whole was hardly apprehended. So far as it was known it was simply taken for granted. Particular manifestations of nature seemed to need explanation. There was something so evidently personal about their venom or their benevolence that they could only be explained as the expression of some superhuman power. The gods of all primitive people are supermen, each

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responsible for some particular phenomenon. There were gods of fire and wind, of sun and moon. There were gods of fear and hate and love. They were conceived in the terms of exaggerated human powers. These gods were not creators. They were personified power in operation along certain definite lines.

A somewhat clearer consciousness of the universe, a realization that it is not simply an aggregation of isolated phenomena, led to the necessity for some creative power. The universe was no longer taken for granted. It needed explanation. Somehow it must have come into being. The idea of unity was not very clear and a kind of cooperative deity was developed. A group of gods had cooperated in creating the heavens and the earth.

A fuller realization of the unity of the universe brought monotheism, the remarkable contribution of the Hebrews to religious thought. Here was a single God of creative power. He made a completed and unified universe, fitted out with its present equipment of animate and inanimate things. This is the hypothesis, the guess, that has come down to the present, and which is held by a large group as the final, the ultimate conception of God.

Twice, since this first guess of a monotheistic God was given to the world there have been epoch-making revelations of him. Jesus Christ gathered up in a single statement the fragmentary ideas of the

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prophets and the poets when he gave humanity God the Father. Through him the God of creative power became the God of loving intelligence.

Many years later science brought the idea of loving intelligence, using that intelligence in the accomplishment of an eternal purpose. The God of Jesus Christ can only be fully understood as the God of evolution, the God who has been and is and shall be eternally working toward the realization of a divine dream.

We have then, today, these two guesses about God, based upon two theories of creation. The first is that six thousand years ago God suddenly created, by fiat, out of nothing, a completed universe. The second is that the divine personality, through an age-long process, has been building a universe, and that he is still at work toward the realization of plans which you and I, even in the light of present knowledge, are unable fully to comprehend.

It is not enough that we should dismiss the whole matter with the statement of our belief that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. If he has written in creation the story of creation, we can learn something of very great value about God if we shall be able to read that story. Tennyson sensed this when he sang,

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“Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies;  
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower,—but if I could understand,  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.”  
And we are beginning to understand.

There is no intention here to attempt to disprove the absolute historicity of the Genesis account of creation. If any intelligent, informed person can read that account without knowing that it is not intended as a literal account of actual happenings, it is hopeless to argue with him. The fact is that this account is a guess, based on traditions much older than the Bible, written down by persons illy informed as to the universe in which they were living. It is immensely valuable because it has been written into lofty literature as one of the best statements possible of a belief in God. As such it cannot be criticized. As history it is impossible. It is matchless poetry. It is not a statement of fact.

There is no intention, either, to defend the theory of evolution. It may be admitted that in many of its details it is still in the hypothesis stage of development. The fact of evolution needs no defense. It is presenting its own evidence. The fact



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of evolution is established, regardless of what they say who tilt against it.

Accepting the fundamental doctrine of God the creator, either of these theories might be true. God could have used either method. Both of them cannot be true. One of them is supported by tradition. The other rests upon scientifically established facts which cannot be controverted. The development of the animate and inanimate universe and the immense antiquity of that universe cannot be denied, except by those who deliberately blind themselves to truth.

It is not important for the pulpit to defend the fact of evolution. It is important to defend the faith of those who have been holding before their eyes the distant star of a belief in God, and who are unable to deny the obvious facts regarding creation. It is important that these facts should be interpreted in the light of that belief. It is important that these facts should be made to reveal God.

Eternity is a long time. It is impossible to comprehend it, though such a statement as was recently made, that geologic remains a billion and a half years old have been found, helps to furnish a measure of eternity. If God is he is eternal. It is futile to insist that through all the aeons he was idle until six thousand years ago when he suddenly

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thought up the scheme of a world and by a wave of his hand wished it into being.

Evolution gives a more plausible God, a more human God. He does things as we would do them, and it is easy for us to think of ourselves as children of such a God. God is still the creator of heaven and earth, but he creates it as man would.

This theory explains man. We are gods in the making. This theory explains Jesus Christ, the supreme example of what man may be and should be. This theory explains God, the intelligent power, working through endless ages to create a heaven on earth, inhabited by his children.

The theory of evolution explains the Genesis story of creation which properly interpreted is not antagonistic to modern science. In Genesis the fact of creation is stated. God made the earth, the sea, the sun, the stars. He made the waters and formed the mountains. When he did it and how, the story itself does not declare. There is, in fact, a very definite evolution indicated in the story of the creation of life. The living things in the water, the birds of the air, the mammals, man—here is a fairly accurate order of creation according to most scientific findings. There is no serious antagonism here. The conflict is between evolutionary creation, and the dogmas about creation which theologians have built

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out of what they have conceived to be a literal interpretation of the Genesis story.

To the absolutely honest truth-seeker it is far more important to know whether any particular theory is true than to know what effect upon faith a belief in its truthfulness will have. All life must rest upon truth, and a disagreeable truth is of more value than a comfortable falsehood.

Fortunately, however, a belief in this particular scientific theory does not necessarily destroy religious faith. It throws new light on the eternal processes of God. It illuminates the face of God and shows him to us as greater than he has ever before been thought to be. The evolutionary theory does destroy some of the old pictures of God. If he is the God of evolution he cannot be the sort of God that he has been represented to be. The more we see of his methods the more we understand his mind and his purposes. We must reshape our thinking about him, but we need not lose him. He is ours more fully than ever before.

Suppose the case of a child who has never seen his mother, but who believes, because of his experiences and his observations, that he has a mother. In the mind of the child this supposition, assuming the form of a firm conviction of truth, becomes a creed,—“I believe in my mother.” Holding that belief the child would seek to vision her. He might draw crude

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sketches to represent his idea of her. These sketches would mean much to him, however far they might be from an actual representation of her features.

Assume that there should later come to the child one who had known the mother. This visitor, in tender, gracious words, would describe the mother. A new picture would be created in the mind of the child and the first crude sketches would be thrown away as being inadequate to show her as she has been described.

Assume that after a time the mother should send a photograph of herself to the child. This would give form to the mental picture created by the description of the mother. It would be placed where it could be often seen and would bring new joy into the life of the child.

Assume, finally that the mother comes, herself. She is like the crude sketches in some measure. She is like the description given by the sympathetic friend. She is like the photograph. But she is more than any of these, or all of these. She lives now in the life of the child. She is a reality in a new sense.

In some such way as this we are coming to know God. Humanity drew the first crude sketches of him in the Genesis story and similar stories in other religious writings. A long time later came one from God. Jesus brought a loving description of him, and he was pictured very differently from the way he

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was represented in the first sketches. Evolution has brought a kind of photograph of Him. We see now, not only infinite power and fatherhood. We see a loving, toiling, suffering, sympathetic, dreaming God, who is in his universe helping make his dreams come true.

Some day for each of us will come the experience which has come to some, when we shall see him face to face. There will be a thrill of joy unutterable when we come into a realization of his spiritual presence. We shall have found our Father at last.

## CHAPTER V

### His Son, Our Lord

The creed thus far has brought what must be a fundamental belief in any satisfying religion. It may be stated in this way: "I believe in God,—an eternal, creative power, of love and intelligence, who, because of a fatherly affection seeking expression, has toiled to create his children in his own image." This statement assumes that for ages untold God has been shaping creation toward some far off, divine event nothing less, in fact, than the deication of life; nothing less than the creation of a race of "men like Gods."

It is quite obvious that man cannot become God in either power or intelligence. It must be in the moral nature, in personality, that deity comes to reside in human life. The history of life indicates not only a struggle upward toward physical efficiency, but a struggle toward perfection of character. Human aspirations, hopes, fears, dreams all point to a Godward striving that has back of it a divine impulse.

In the study of the creed we have come to the question of the relationship of God and man in that struggle. In every religion the story of the upward

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climb toward God is to be found. In every religion is a God-man, or god-men, bridging the apparent chasm between the ineffable supreme being and his children. In the Christian religion this divine human is Jesus Christ, His son, our lord.

It is a dangerous thing to attempt to take away from any people their slogans. Religion is filled with these. Almost every great religious controversy has raged around some slogan, some form of words, not fundamental, but made primary in the thinking of some particular period. In order to clearly see the truth it is often necessary to destroy these slogans. They are a hindrance to clear thinking.

For the purpose of this discussion it is necessary to lay aside, at least temporarily, a few of these slogans which have grown up around the personality of Jesus Christ. One other it is necessary to retranslate.

The first of these is the doctrine of the virgin birth. This is a tradition common to many religions. It is not mentioned by Jesus himself, nor by John, by Mark, by Paul. It may be just a bit of beautiful poetry, wrought into the record to explain, as poetry, not as history, the marvelous life that began in Bethlehem. It should not create too great a shock to put it aside as a dogma.

The second is the doctrine of the bodily resurrection. This idea is held most tenaciously, in spite

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of its materialism, its paganism. It is hardly helpful to the idea of the immortality of personality, of spirit. There can be no question that the disciples believed that they saw Jesus after his death in his actual physical being. Their souls were very sensitive in those days, and the impact of the living soul of Christ brought to them a very great sense of reality. He lived again for them, and lived so vitally that they seemed to see him. With a clearer perception of spiritual values it should not be difficult for us to set aside, as unnecessary, the belief that he returned in actual bodily form and that because he so returned we shall some day come again.

The third of these doctrines grows out of the second. The idea of the second coming of Jesus rests upon another purely materialistic conception. Only the most abject literalism in the interpretation of a few obscure passages can lead anyone to expect the visible return of Christ to set up his kingdom. The return of Christ in Christ-like lives may, and should be expected. This is a spiritual, not a materialistic idea. It should not be difficult to lay aside the dogma that a millenium is to come in by cataclysm and revolution, and substitute for it the more rational idea that the kingdom of Heaven is to be set up on earth by individual and social regeneration.

With these slogans put aside the question remains whether there is any rich and valuable content



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left in the story of Jesus Christ. It is important to discover whether there is any reason for incorporating him in a religious creed, if these doctrines about him are not likewise included. For a generation seeking a sign there is not. For those who are seeking truth on the basis of a real faith there is a rich spiritual content in the statement, "I believe in Jesus Christ, His son, our Lord."

We must, of course believe in his historicity. There is every reason to believe in this, whether we accept every incident in the record of his life or not. That Jesus lived, and moved, and had his being cannot be questioned. Nor can it be questioned that he most profoundly influenced the group with which he lived. Theodore Parker was not altogether right in saying that if the historicity of Christ were disproved his spiritual value would remain. Spiritual values find their only effective expression in personality.

The teachings of Jesus have great ethical value in themselves, but if he is to save the world it must be because he is an historical fact, and of this there is no question. He has loomed above all history for nearly two thousand years. Those who have visited the Yosemite valley have felt the dominance of the great towering mass of rock known as Half Dome. They have made the discovery that from any part of the valley or the surrounding mountains this vast rock is central and dominant. In some such way as

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this Jesus Christ is a towering historical figure, whether he is come at from the standpoint of art or literature or morals or ethics or religion or government.

We must believe in Jesus Christ as he appears in his character as the supreme revelation of God. He has not given us the only revelation of God. In him is not the first human revelation, but in him is the greatest and the clearest. God has been very definitely revealed in nature, but only as possessing power and intelligence, not as a moral being. It is necessary for man that God should be revealed as a being of character, for man is more than a mere natural phenomenon, unless we accept blank materialism. Mathew Arnold says:

“Know, man hath all that nature hath, but more,  
And in that more lie all his hopes of good.  
Man must begin, know this, where nature ends;  
Nature and man can never be fast friends.”

The value of Jesus lies in his revelation of the character of God. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” has no reference to physical or intellectual sight. It means that in Jesus is a picture of the soul of God. Long before Jesus came God had been seeking to make such a revelation and had partially succeeded in such men as Moses, Abraham, David,

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Isaiah, Amos. They had given gleams of the idea of divine fatherhood. Jesus brought the full light of that matchless conception.

We know that the greatest God is the God who in creative power expressed infinite love, benevolence and kindly will. God continually tried to express himself as these moral qualities, through personalities. He measurably succeeded in millions of good men and women. He supremely succeeded in Jesus, who became the anointed, the chosen one, and accepted the challenge to become the willing medium through whom God should come to man. In the language of John he was the eternal Word, the living exposition of the intent, the purpose of God to manifest himself in man. In Jesus that eternal purpose reached its fullest and clearest manifestation. Jesus was the supreme revelation of God.

This is true because he allowed himself to become god. It is necessary here to set aside another slogan, that of the deity of Christ, or to reinterpret it. Jesus never once claimed to be God. The nearest approach to such a claim is found in the tenth chapter of John, where he used the phrase, son of God, a phrase which was misunderstood then as it has been since.

There is no need to set up for Jesus a claim which he did not see fit to make for himself. Setting up such a claim removes all possibility of bridging

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the supposed chasm between God and man. The idea of the trinity, which was heresy for a long time after Christ died, grew out of the mystical notion that all of deity and all of humanity were combined in him, when it is clear from every fact of his life that he did not have, and did not claim to have, as an actual God, all divine power and wisdom. God is not seeking to give infinite power and infinite wisdom to humanity and there was no reason why these qualities should be found in Jesus.

Jesus did become the human medium for the expression of the full measure of divine character. The whole moral being of God found itself manifested in Jesus Christ. He was altogether lovely, even though not altogether powerful and wise. Nor does this mean that Jesus was just a good man. It does not mean that he was God and man, even in these moral qualities. He was God in man, and because he was willing that God should dwell in him he became God in every essential sense of that word. Every fact in the life of Jesus indicates that we may put into our creed the words, "I believe in Jesus Christ, His son."

Jesus has become more than the son of God for humanity, however. There is no great value to men in speculating on the sonship of Jesus, unless that sonship has meaning in life. It is when Jesus becomes our Lord that the doctrine of his sonship comes

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to have real worth. If through him and because of him we likewise come into the realization of a measure of sonship the doctrine becomes vital for us. And humanity has come to know the Lordship of Jesus in life.

This has come about because of two factors in his life which have already been suggested. He is our Lord because of his divinity. This is true of every great personality. Every good man who reveals in a special way the divine will becomes our Lord, because we see God in him. We are dominated by these personalities to the extent that they reveal the divine will.

When Jesus says that in moral power he and his father are one we recognize the authority of God speaking. We own him Lord who has become the spokesman of God. His statement "finds us." As Coleridge says, "In short, whatever finds me bears witness that it has proceeded from a holy spirit." Because we seem to see in Jesus very God in moral power, we crown him Lord of all.

But our acknowledgement of his lordship would be perfunctory or abject if we did not feel that his divinity had expressed itself through his humanity, and that his experience is not necessarily unique. Jesus becomes our Lord not through his miraculous birth, but through his miraculous life, in spite of his human birth.

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Jesus' life would have no great value for us if every child who is born in however humble a home did not have Christly potentialities. Until the world is populated by Christs, by those who are chosen and anointed to manifest the moral power of God, the kingdom of heaven will not come in. If the birth of Jesus was miraculous the birth of every human child is miraculous. And it is. Every babe who comes into the world comes with power to express the moral character of God. At every human birth the angels have a right to sing and the stars to rejoice together, for every mother's travail brings a potential Christ into the stream of human life.

When we recite in our creed the words, "I believe in Jesus Christ, His son, our Lord," we are putting ourselves under the obligation to fulfill the terms of that lordship in our lives. It is not enough that we should repeat the words. It is not enough that we should perform the rites. We shall acknowledge him our Lord by doing the works of God.

Jesus submitted to this test himself. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not." The only test of loyalty is actual discipleship. This may be shown in distinctly religious functions. It must be shown in all of life. It must appear in honor and justice, in mercy and brotherhood in all the relationships of life. The incarnate God has power to glor-

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ify all the commonplaces of life, and the complete lordship of Jesus is demonstrated in his amazing power to make men Christlike.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Holy Ghost, The Soul of God

It has been necessary in the preceding discussions to clear away certain notions which have become associated with the statements of the creed, but which are not really inherent in them. It is necessary to continue this method in considering the conception of the Holy Ghost.

The doctrine of the trinity has been a bulwark of the orthodox church. The Apostles' Creed does not state the dogma clearly, but it does infer it, in the reference to the Holy Ghost. As interpreted and wrought into the body of doctrine of the churches, the Holy Ghost becomes known as the third person of the trinity.

The doctrine of the trinity is not a Christian doctrine. If we take at its face value the idea enunciated by the early church fathers this is an essentially pagan dogma. It is not Christian, because it is not found in the teachings of Jesus Christ. No statement of his justifies the belief that he had any reference to the Holy Ghost as a person, at least as we understand that word. The doctrine of the trinity,



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as it later found its way into some of the creeds, is not found definitely stated in the writings of Paul. It was not a part of the body of belief of the early church. It was built up later, in an attempt to explain some very simple and plain statements of Jesus, which in the light of their knowledge the early fathers could not otherwise understand. In their attempt to explain they enunciated a much more difficult conception than that which they attempted to make clear.

The doctrine of the trinity, in its extreme statement, creates a tritheism. The whole Jewish system of religion rests upon the idea of God, indivisible, of all power and all wisdom and all love. Christianity took over this fundamental idea, but the creedmakers have not been content to permit it to stand in its original purity. The doctrine of the trinity gives the strange idea of one God in three persons, which, of course, is meaningless in the terms of human understanding.

The Athanasian creed contains this dogma in its extreme form. The so-called "Father of Orthodoxy" is not responsible for the creed, but in the statement of faith named for him it is declared that nothing shall be admitted which weakens the conception that the Son and the Holy Ghost are coequal with God, the Father; that they are, to use the words of the Nicene creed, "Very God of very God." Father, Son and Holy Ghost are "persons" of the Godhead. With

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this declaration goes the further statement that nothing must be admitted which in the slightest degree dilutes the idea of the utter unity of God. He is one God, indivisible. And the third declaration of the creed is that an absolute belief in this strange doctrine is essential to salvation. This idea of the trinity, which gradually grew up several centuries after the time of Christ, has been the center of some of the most bitter theological controversies.

There is no great present interest for us in these disputes. It is sufficient to know that this conception of the Godhead is so entirely pagan and un-Christian that, except in a very dim and indistinct way it is held by no one, although there are millions of people who are still ready to fight fiercely for the credal statement of it. It is being solemnly repeated in thousands of churches by those to whom it has never meant anything, and can never mean anything, unless it means that there are three gods instead of one.

There is an entirely acceptable doctrine of the trinity, and one which does not assail the reason. It is found, not in the rigid word "person," as applied to the Holy Ghost, but in the newer word, "personality."

It is easy to think of a three-fold God in terms of personality. An analogy is not far to seek. Here is a man, who is also a father, a citizen, a friend. He

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is a man, a human unit; not three, but one, and yet to the world he appears as three.

In his personality as a father he has certain relationships, a certain character, certain emotions, certain expressions of life. As a father he has a distinct mission and he comes into helpful contact with a particular group.

As a citizen he somewhat lays aside the characteristics of fatherhood. He is expressing himself through his business. Where as a father he is gentle, as a citizen he may be hard. He touches other groups. He meets men in politics whom in the home he would never touch. In all the workaday activities of life his manhood is manifesting itself, but he is not a father. He is a citizen.

In the social realm he shows other traits. He is still a man, but he is revealing himself as a friend. The qualities which he displays are not those which come to the surface as father or as citizen. They are no less fine and no less a part of the manhood of him, but they reveal another personality.

Here is a trinity. Here are three in one,—not three persons, but three personalities. It may not be so difficult to think of God in this way, and this accords perfectly with what Jesus taught about him. God manifested his personality, his love and power, as creator. And he is still manifesting it. He manifested his personality, his love and power as God-

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man in Jesus Christ. And he is still manifesting it. He manifested his personality, his love and power as spirit, unseen, but a tremendous reality in the lives of millions of people. And he is still manifesting it.

The Holy Ghost is the soul of God seeking communion with the soul of man. God in creation was not enough. God revealed in the majesty of a single supreme human life was not enough. If God is to mean anything to man, and if man is to mean anything to God there must be this manifestation of his personality through the holy spirit. His soul must touch your soul and my soul, here and now. There must be a friendly relationship set up.

This suggestion brings a vitally important question. How does the soul of God reveal itself to men and operate upon them ?

The theologians speak of the transcendence of God and the imminence of God. Transcendence means that God is high and lifted up. Imminence means that he is near and cordial. God is neither of these alone. He is both. God is transcendent. He is imminent.

The idea of the operation of the Holy Ghost which anyone may adopt will depend upon which aspect of God is emphasized. When we think of the transcendence of God the Holy Ghost becomes a sort of ambassador extraordinary to certain persons under special circumstances. He may come to bring physi-

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cal power to a Samson. He may come to bring ecstasy to a Paul, or to the disciples gathered in the upper room. He may come to a Gideon or a Joshua to bring the capacity for an unusual task. He may bring an unusual power to interpret the mind of God to an Isaiah. He is manifested under special and spectacular circumstances.

Under the conception of the imminence of God we find the Holy Ghost, the soul of God, as a gracious influence in all life. He is present not only in the moment of ecstasy, but in the hour of toil. He comes when the stress of sorrow is a burden and when life is glad with joy. He is found in the midst of every circumstance of life. He is working in man, not upon man. He is indwelling, giving power, not an outside manipulator of life bringing about simply some fantastic display.

The first idea has been very common in religion. Unfortunately it is common today, with the result that religion has been largely made a thing of ecstatic experiences, of explosive joys, and it has been assumed that when these are not present God is not present. Many lives have been wrecked under the spectacular type of evangelistic preaching by this idea of the operation of the Holy Ghost. It has been assumed that if the ecstasy did not come God had not come. It is a devastating doctrine. It has led many people to ask the question recently asked by a writer in one

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of the magazines, "What has become of God?" The question arises out of the circumstance that there is so little furore in religion today.

We need to come to the knowledge that the Holy Ghost, the soul of God, does not operate in this furious fashion very often. We need to know that it is a gentle, pervasive influence in life, always present, always seeking expression, always desiring communion with the soul of man, and only manifesting itself in some outstanding way when there is some particular need for outstanding activity.

This gentler Holy Ghost adjusts itself to the peculiarities of the individual. There are some people who become mystics under the gracious power of the soul of God. There are others who become practical altruists. A quiet, introspective person, retiring in disposition, and uncomfortable when with others, will find great joy in meditation and in prayer. Another, who loves his kind, who delights in activity, finds the soul of God expressing itself through his life in activity.

The ultimate effect upon the individual character is likely to be about the same in each case. Each of the two becomes more God-like as he yields to the influence of the God-soul. The effect upon humanity is likely to be equally important. We need mystics and we need altruists and we need prophets. We need those who will lead us into the secret place apart in

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quietness. We need those who will translate divine love into the commonplaces of life. We need those who, inflamed with a holy passion become leaders of crusades. It might be better if the mystic and the altruist and the prophet were the same person, but if this cannot be the three should at least find it possible to live together in gracious companionship.

The phrase, "The spirit filled life," is often used to describe the person who devotes himself very largely to pious exercises. Or perchance to one who draws himself apart from the world, who refuses the ordinary pleasures of life, who is an abstainer from this and that. Or it may be to one who withdraws into the cloisters of life and gives himself to meditation. Such a person may have a spirit-filled life. In fact he is very likely to have such a life, for God is very easy to find.

But he is also as likely to be spirit-filled who throws himself with utter abandon into the stream of human life. He tastes all its bitter and its sweet. He faces its difficulties without fleeing from them. He does some great things in a God-like way, even though the thing he does may not bear the stamp of religion. He transacts the business of life and meets the problems of life and evades no responsibility in life. He helps to establish justice, he extends mercy, he brings the love of God down to earth. Such a person is likely to have a spirit-filled life, for God is

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easy to find by those who are about the business of their father.

Frederick L. Hosmer has these lines:

We pray no more, made lowly wise, for miracle and  
sign;  
Anoint our eyes to see within the common, the  
divine.  
We turn from seeking thee afar and in unwonted  
ways,  
To build from out our daily lives the temples of Thy  
praise.  
And if thy casual comings, Lord, to hearts of old  
were dear,  
What joy shall dwell within the faith that finds thee  
ever near.  
And nobler yet shall duty grow, and more shall wor-  
ship be,  
When thou art found in all our life, and all our life  
in thee.

The world today needs this sort of indwelling God. We have become so busy that we do not feel his presence very distinctly sometimes. The world is not safe without God, without the soul of God. We need to be more conscious of him. The feeling of nearness is possible.



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Ralph Waldo Trine writes of being "In tune with the infinite." God is a broadcasting station of power and inspiration and love. If we will "tune in" we shall feel the thrill of the Holy Ghost. Some people never catch the infinite vibrations. Some catch them, but with interference. Some find the full glow of the divine emanations and life becomes a marvelous harmony of greatness and goodness.

## CHAPTER VII

### The Communion of Saints

There is no item of the Creed which the Christian of today may more readily accept, and accept with greater pleasure, than that which reads, "I believe in the holy catholic church," provided these words are given an interpretation which was not possible when they were first spoken. Then there was only one church, and if no new meaning is to be given the creed it stands as a declaration of approval of the mother church from which the creed came. When used by Protestant churches it is always with another meaning, even when used by those who would refuse the right of interpretation to others.

If the words are to be used as they might have been used by the apostles they are an expression of belief in the Jewish church. Jesus was never anything else but a Jew, and immediately following his death his followers were almost exclusively Jews. The holy, universal church to the apostles was the church which they still believed would draw to itself all other people. The holy catholic church must mean something more than a particular organization.

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Jesus himself seems to have believed that something more comprehensive must and would come. The words which he addressed to Peter are adequate reason for believing that he knew the movement which he had started must be crystalized into an institution which would reach far beyond the boundaries of Israel. When he sent his disciples out, in his last message, he did not send them as Jewish missionaries. He sent them to put under way a great force which should reach the uttermost parts of the earth, and which should be circumscribed by no limitations of sect or nationality or color.

"The holy catholic church" is an apt description of what he was projecting, and we may well believe in it, in spite of the way in which the meaning of the word "church" has been delimited. It has come to be an institution, or a group of institutions, not a fellowship. Interpreting the creed in the large sense there may be no impropriety in asserting, "I believe in the holy catholic church."

Viewing the church as we know it today, however, with its obvious inadequacies, it may be reasonably questioned whether as an institution it is essential, whether there may not be found a substitute for it, and if not, what must be done in order that it may become the universal expression of the mind of Jesus.

From its inception in the confession of Peter, through the period of development into its highly or-

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ganized state and its later division into numerous sects, the church has been a dominant factor in the growth of civilization. Governments have been shaped by it. Its cathedrals have fixed architectural styles. The great art and literature and music of the world are largely the art and music and literature of the church. Autocratic as the church has been at times it has been responsible for the most advanced democratic ideals. It has held moral standards aloft in business and social life. It has permeated every worthy enterprise of civilized people for nearly twenty centuries.

In spite of the dominant place of the church in the past there are those who are flippantly saying to-day that it has outlived its usefulness, that it has failed, that it is dying. It is no light matter to make such a claim. It is as though one were to say that the family has failed, and that as an institution it must pass out, because there is a divorce problem, or that democracy has failed and is dying, because all the international difficulties have not yet been settled.

The church is passing through a crisis. Of that there can be no question. The crisis is much more serious than many of the smug leaders are willing to admit. The church has not the direct authority that it has had in the past. It is not the central factor in life that it has been. There is a sort of indifference,

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growing out of a dangerous agnosticism which threatens the church as an organization.

This cannot be cured by any frantic appeal to the past. If the church as an institution is to be saved it will be by meeting the situation squarely, not by seeking to evade it or by hiding behind the musty traditions of other days.

Those who have the opportunity to learn the attitude of the average man today to the church receive some revelations that are not at all encouraging. Here is a young business man. He is clean in his life. His business ideals are fine. He has come out of a Christian home. He rarely attends a church service and then only out of curiosity. Many such young business men have spoken frankly to me about the church. They do not treat it with contempt. They recognize that it has been a powerful institution, and that it has been responsible for much that makes civilization what it is. But they consider that it has not now an essential place in the progress which they see must come. The new social order which is to answer every human need in the future is to come, they believe, not because of the church, but in spite of it. They think the time has come when this institution should be decently buried. It deserves a monument for its achievements in the past, but not the tribute of present loyalty. Other institutions are held to be

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better fitted to carry on the work of social regeneration in the future.

These young people are probably right if it can be assumed that humanity does not need the spiritual elements for which the church has always stood, for which it stands today. If God can be bowed out of the universe with thanks for what he has already done, the church is not necessary. It has already set moral forces at work in the world which will carry on without the aid of this institution. But if religion is to be retained it will be through the church. There is no substitute for the church if God is to become incarnate in humanity.

It is perfectly proper to ask that thinking people, who are looking for the incoming of a golden age in society, shall accept the statement of the creed, "I believe in the holy catholic church," as defined by the further words, "the communion of saints." No particular church is essential. The fundamental differences between the denominations are about as vital as the difference between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee. The sects are separated by utterly non-essential differences. There is really a common rock upon which they all rest, although, standing upon that rock they do a deal of fighting over the manner in which the service shall be conducted or who shall receive the sacraments or what particular slogans shall be used in the ritual.

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The church as an essential institution must be a communion of saints, but here are two words that need definition. The saints must not be cloistered, plaster saints. They must be men and women of human passions and desires, living the pulsing life of humanity. There is no place for the sanctimonious saint who spends his time carefully watching his spiritual symptoms. It does not matter so very much what he believes, so long as he believes in God, in Jesus as the interpreter of the will of God, in the potential divinity of humanity, and so long as he believes Jesus enough to accept him as lord of life.

Communion means more than getting into a congenial crowd. It means more than carefully selecting a minister who will become a mere repeater of pious platitudes. It means the bringing of all our intellectual differences, all our varying temperments, all our likes and dislikes, all our prejudices and predilections, under the sway and dominance of a single spirit. That spirit may be found in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Regardless of the outward form there must be a spiritual fellowship, out of which the outward form will develop to meet the needs of the time.

Just here is where the crisis arises, out of the age-old insistence on the supremacy of the letter which killeth over the spirit which giveth life. This crisis will be met, as such crises have been met in the past.

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Dr. George C. Lorimer was writing twenty years ago of the crisis of religion, just as Dr. Parks is writing today of the crisis of the churches. It is a comforting thing that the church has passed so many crises.

Dr. Lorimer says that the church must respect the zeit geist, the time spirit. This means that it must live in the present, not in the past. It may retain whatever is valuable out of the past, but it must interpret it in terms of the present age.

This calls for the use by the church of a modern language and a modern mode of thought. There can be no effective communion without this. In every other element of life we are making use of what we know today. In the church are millions who insist upon the use of obsolete terms of expression, of traditional cant, of the pious language of the past that is foreign to the present day thinking. Still worse, they insist that it is atheistical to accept any knowledge that has come into human comprehension since the Bible was written and since the creeds were formulated. This will not do, for it produces fog in the mind and disbelief in the soul. The church has a great message. It should be spoken so people can understand it.

Before there can be any communion there must come a fraternity of spirit. There must be unity. It is utter folly to assume that differences of interpretation call for separate organizations. It is quite



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possible that complete organic union of the churches cannot be brought about, but there must come, somehow, unity of spirit. This does not call for uniformity. In no grouping of people can this be accomplished. It does call for tolerance, the same tolerance that men have in their political and business relationships. A stern creed undertakes to establish uniformity, and by so doing brings division, for no creed can state universal truth, acceptable to all minds. There can, and must be, in the midst of the diversity of minds the common purpose which will bind all men together in a great brotherhood.

This spirit must find expression in activity, and there is no more sure basis for the communion of saints than in united effort for the accomplishment of a divine task. The church needs new activity if it is to become a fellowship. It does not need new activities. Nearly all the churches have been passing through a period in which they have been puttering about, substituting activities for activity. They have been trying to find something to do to make the church attractive.

The gymnasium, the playground, the young people's societies, the various lines of social service are all legitimate accessories of the church, and all perfectly proper secondary activities under certain conditions. They are not primary, and the kingdom of heaven will not be brought in by such means, what-

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ever part these things may have in the life of the church as an expression of the spirit that is within it.

The fundamental purpose of the church is to put religion into the community. Activities will not do this, but when this has come about the activities that are needed will follow. There must be vitality in the institution, the thrill of power, which will work itself out through all the avenues of life. The church must absorb the Christlike spirit, which will then translate itself in love and service in the world. There will always be communion of soul when people are united in divine activity.

Fellowship will find one of its best expressions in worship. This is the first function of the holy catholic church. The service of worship may be made so inspirational that there will be a real communion of the saints. The place will have something to do with it. Too many church buildings are austere and forbidding. Beauty has a tremendous power to bind people together. Differences are forgotten in the midst of that which is fine. The church building itself should be a place into which no one can come without being uplifted. It should be a true sanctuary.

Into such a place people may come to make a common search for truth, in the spirit of goodwill. In such a place there will be spiritual activity. In such a place there may be communion with God.

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There can be no communion of man with man, without the worship of God. Whatever else a church may be it must be a spot where truth, beauty and love are found, and where the souls of men are bound together in an intimate relationship with a common father. In true worship there can be no division, there will be a communion of souls, a holy church.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Redemption—The Forgiveness of Sins

Popular interest in the subject of sin has greatly decreased within recent years. A reason for this is to be found in the new complexity of life. The mass of intricate interests which crowd the days leaves little time for the morbid introspection that made the sense of sin so poignant in other times. We are too busy with the ever present business of living to spend much time wrestling with the devil.

A second reason for this lessened interest in sin is the fact that some of the ancient sanctions of religion have lost their force. The materialistic idea of a physical hell as a place of eternal punishment for sins has been set aside, and with it the sense of the impending doom of the sinner. The more spiritual conception of punishment does not have the terrors that the old conception held.

The third reason may lie in a changing meaning of sin, which makes it less an outward manifestation and more completely an inward experience. It is more difficult to vision as sin a motive or an impulse than it is an act.

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In spite of the lessened interest in the subject, however, sin remains the most tragic fact in human life. It stands as the barrier to the complete realization of the divinity which properly belongs to the children of God. It is still the factor which drives us out of Eden.

The discussion of the theme cannot be altogether orderly and logical. It is necessary to touch on two or three somewhat unrelated phases of the theological theories of sin, and to seek a definition of forgiveness that will have a somewhat larger meaning than is involved in some of the dogmas.

It is perhaps obvious that the meaning of sin must change with the growth of a people in what may be termed culture. Fashions in sins change, just as do fashions in clothing or in food.

Among a primitive people anything is sin which is believed to invoke the wrath of the gods of those people. Taboo is any prohibition which is supported by a supernatural sanction. Whatever is displeasing to the gods is sin.

As religion develops a ritual and a ceremonial, offences against the ritual and ceremonial law are held to be sin because they are offences against the god in whose interest the law has been created. There is an interesting story in Second Samuel of Uzzah, who put forth his hand and touched the ark as it was being conveyed upon a cart, and who by this act aroused

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the anger of God and was stricken to his death. There is clearly no immorality in thoughtfully trying to prevent a sacred object from falling, but Uzzah was believed to have infringed a ceremonial law and to have suffered for his grievous sin the punishment of death. The ceremonial law set up sacred places and sacred objects. It prescribed various acts which were marks of sanctity. Sin was the violation of the sacred, by disobedience to ceremonial law.

Many of the regulatory laws seem silly to us to-day, and yet some quite modern ideas of sin are no less silly. They all have to do with outward manifestations and nothing to do with the spirit of a man.

With the growth of moral ideas the conception of sin changes. It comes to have more to do with human relationships. It involves considerations of mercy and justice and honor. It becomes clear that sin strikes deep into the soul.

It is quite evident that there is a modicum of truth in the dogma of original sin, although the historical basis upon which this dogma rests has been swept away. Sin is something that has to do with the very nature of man. It takes a change of heart to destroy it. The theological doctrine of original sin is, of course untenable, although it underlies most of the theology of the past centuries.

With the sweeping away of the dogma the foundation goes from beneath the plan of salvation

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so ingeniously devised by Paul, or rather by some of the interpreters of Paul. The doctrine of original sin is, very simply, the idea that in the fall of Adam in the garden of Eden guilt was fastened upon the race. Regardless of whether there was actual sin everyone came under condemnation by virtue of being a descendent of Adam. Through the misdeed of the first man humanity became infected with depravity, which in the view of our austere theological ancestors was total depravity.

This doctrine cannot stand except by the acceptance of the story of Adam as literal history, which explains the vigor with which some of our modern Puritans defend the historicity of Genesis. If man did not fall from a state of perfection, but is struggling up toward perfection the need for much of the formerly accepted theology is gone. It becomes necessary to find a new meaning of sin, and a new definition of forgiveness.

Winston Churchill defines original sin, as "the misinterpretation of life's purposes." No better definition can be given of sin, original or actual. With this definition before us it becomes possible to draw a distinction between sin and sins. To give the creed real meaning it must provide for the forgiveness not only of sins but of sin. It is easy to forgive sins. It is not so easy to forgive sin, and to purge the life of sin.

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There are not nearly so many sins today as there were formerly. There is reason to believe that there is as much sin. Sin has not so much to do with acts as with motives and purposes and spiritual attitudes. The Christian ideas of sin have, not so long ago, passed through the primitive period of thought. Man assumed to lay down lines of conduct based on what was conceived to be the will of God, and to condemn to eternal punishment anyone who infringed in the slightest degree these regulations and failed to pass through the fixed formula for receiving divine forgiveness.

The preachers of a generation ago had the various sins carefully arranged and at regular intervals thundered against them. Among them were drunkenness, smoking, dancing, card-playing, theater going, attendance upon the circus. There was no joy-riding and there were no moving pictures in those days, else they would have been included, being forms of recreation that bring some pleasure to some people. In these carefully catalogued sins there were few that were inherently evil, although any of them might be so used as to become a misinterpretation of life's purposes.

With this meaning of sin every human idiosyncrasy became a subject of divine wrath, at least in the view of the stern persons who felt themselves chosen to define the proper manner of life for others.



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Probably as much real sin, sin of the spirit, has been committed in condemning these sins, as was found in the sins themselves.

Sin is something more serious and fundamental than this. It is the harboring in the soul of an un-Godlike, un-Christlike spirit, corroding the life and bringing misery to others.

The unpardonable sin is described by Jesus as the sin against the Holy Ghost. This is a difficult passage as ordinarily interpreted, although it is probably quite simple. It means the refusal to accept the spirit which was in Jesus. Paul enjoins the disciples to "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus," and says, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The original sin, the unpardonable sin is the rejection of the Christ spirit. This results in a misinterpretation of life's purpose that lasts as long as the rejection continues.

Sin is something that has to do with the soul. It may manifest itself in outward acts or it may not, but life can never be complete and adequate as long as it is present.

With this idea of sin the doctrine of divine forgiveness assumes a larger meaning. It becomes an active force, making for redemption, which is the goal of God for his children.

God ceases to be a book-keeper, setting down the acts of man and adding up the balance as a basis for

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judgment. He does not send in a bill and demand payment in a certain form of repentance. He cannot be mollified by a certain emotional eruption, or by the acceptance of a particular creed.

God is a father. He is not seeking chiefly to lay down a formula which will justify him in forgiving his children if they approve it. He is seeking to save from sin. Forgiveness means more than accepting penance for an act which is not in strict conformity with the ceremonial law. Forgiveness involves the going out of the shepherd in search of the lost sheep. It involves the meeting of the prodigal.

Doctrines of the atonement by the death of Christ, which had a small place in the creeds, but a large place in theological speculation, rested upon the idea that God was angered by the misdeeds of his children, and that he could only be placated by such a sacrifice as that of Jesus on the cross. This was drawn out of the old Jewish system of sacrifice by Paul. There have been many theories of the atonement, none of them ever fully accepted, but vestiges of all of them may be found in the popular theology of today.

There was one recently popular and still popular in places, which is expressed in the words of a revival hymn:

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Jesus paid it all,  
All to him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.

The efficacy of the blood of Jesus has been emphasized, with the idea that by his death he bore the sin of the world, and by his death satisfied God's sense of justice, relieving man from the necessity of punishment. This is not an attractive doctrine, whether it rests on the assumption that God forced this sacrifice on Jesus, or accepted the sacrifice which Jesus himself offered. The human sense of moral right is outraged by the idea that the physical death of an innocent person can be accepted in expiation of the sin of the guilty. Human experience also teaches that no measure of forgiveness can do away with the punishment for sin, which must come, not in some far-away place, but here and now.

Most of the difficulties in connection with the doctrine of the atonement would disappear if it were taken at its face value—the at-one-ment. This is the purpose of forgiveness,—to make God and man one. In-so-far and in such a way as the death of Jesus helps to accomplish this it becomes a part of a reasonable plan of salvation from sin.

This involves a turning around of the whole idea. The old thought was that God was placated,

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reconciled, by the death of Christ. The new conception is that God is the one seeking reconciliation and that man must be reconciled. Paul expressed it when he declared that God is in Christ reconciling man to himself.

With this idea certain assumptions may be made about God. If he is a judge he is a kindly judge. His purpose in all his dealings with his children is restoration, not punishment. His only feeling is not anger, but sorrow at the inadequacies of his children. He has a sympathetic attitude which takes into account that his children are struggling upward toward light and life, that they are prone to error and are not yet perfect.

God is the reconciling force. Through Jesus he sought to demonstrate his desire for oneness with his children. Through Jesus he sought to present a symbol of life as it ought to be, even to the limits of sacrifice, and with this view the death of Jesus has its rightful place.

Sin is selfishness and selfishness is sin. Sin separates from God, for God is unselfish. Jesus manifested by his life and his death the supreme spirit of unselfishness. He may become a living power to work unselfishness in human life,—and has done so in millions of lives.

The death of Christ does not placate God or cool his anger. It does crown a life that demonstrates the

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power of the divine in humanity. That power was great enough to lead him into absolute purity and unselfishness of life, which reached its consummation on the cross.

The cross has a tremendous power to redeem and reconcile, because it is the crowning of a life. Its impelling power is not in the mystic bearing of guilt but in a noble bearing of burden. Jesus' life would have been an atoning, a reconciling life, if there had been no cross. The cross as the symbol of the consummate love of God that will not be denied is the atoning power that will redeem humanity.

Jesus demonstrated long before Calvary the truth which God had been trying to teach the world,—that there is unity between God and man. Jesus believed it enough to die for it. This was a vicarious sacrifice. Jesus did not become a sinner and bear the burden of sin in the sense that some doctrines teach. He did bear the suffering for sin and make the vicarious atonement for it. In this sense the atonement lives today in humanity. The spirit of Jesus lives in many lives. It is a living atonement that we all may be one with God. Divine forgiveness means the bringing into the soul of the Christ spirit, by which there will come about a correct interpretation of life's purposes.

When this comes we will be one with God. We will be one with each other. The kingdom of heaven

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will have come in. It is the life of Christ, in which Calvary is only an incident, that accomplishes the atonement, and that makes divine forgiveness and human redemption possible.

## CHAPTER IX

### Resurrection to Life

The doctrine of the resurrection has been made the foundation of the religion of Jesus Christ. From Paul on, the creators of the church have insisted that the one thing essential to Christianity is a belief that Jesus rose from the dead. Undoubtedly this belief brought the courage which made possible the early church. Undoubtedly this belief has much to do with the power of Paul, for he never escaped the conviction that he had met Jesus upon the Damascus road.

Unfortunately the exact implications of Paul's teaching have not been accepted. If this had been done much of the materialistic idea of the resurrection would have been avoided. The resurrected Lord known to Paul was not the resurrected Lord the disciples thought they saw. The resurrected Christ whom Paul saw is the Christ we all may see and know if we can rid ourselves of the idea that he must come back to us in the flesh.

It is strange that the story of the ascension has not a larger place in theology. Here, if anywhere is to

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be found a symbol of the immortal spiritual life which is to replace this mortal physical life. Here is a story of the Christ, his bodily form gradually fading away, leaving only the intangible, but very real consciousness of a spiritual presence. Here is, in fact, the real resurrection, and the stories which are associated with the tomb have only the remotest connection with the life of the spirit.

The reason for the large place of the resurrection stories in the development of the church is in the fact that these stories to the more or less untutored minds of those who heard them and believed them in those early days, were a proof of the immortality of the soul. Sin and death were intimately associated in their thinking. Paul touched on this—"For as in Adam all die." The original sin of Adam is taken to be the cause of death as a human experience. "So in Jesus shall all be made alive." Paul is saying that the offset to the sin of Adam is the sacrifice of Jesus, that as Jesus bore the burden of the sin he has destroyed death by his resurrection.

It is a beautiful symbol, but the symbol stands for something far more than the restoration of a body that has suffered dissolution. The life that Jesus restored is a life of spiritual power. It has nothing whatever to do with the body.

The resurrection stories rightly arouse interest, for if they do demonstrate immortality they furnish



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the basis for all religion. There is no necessity for religion unless the soul is eternal, unless the personality persists beyond the grave. If this life is all, we can go it alone. There is no reason for believing with Paul that if this life is all we are of all men most miserable, for if we would use a reasonable amount of common sense in our relationships this life might be made glorious. But if this life is all we do not especially need to know God and be related to him. We can work out our own salvation with fear and trembling or with joy and gladness.

Religion must rest upon a belief in immortality. If the doctrine of the resurrection has bearing upon the belief in immortality we should know what it is. This belief has never received sure proof. It grows out of hope. It is almost universal, but it has never been demonstrated as a scientific fact. Any circumstance which will give support to the hope is of supreme importance. Whatever support of the doctrine of immortality it is possible to gain from any source is not to be lightly treated. If the resurrection stories give any evidence of the eternal persistence of the soul they cannot be thrown away without very clear proof that they are not true. If there is anything in them, even though they are merely poetic tradition, that will strengthen faith, they should be so interpreted that they will bring assurance to longing human souls.

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The older theory of the resurrection of Jesus, that which was probably held by the disciples, certainly that which the early church fathers believed the disciples held, was in a literal bodily resurrection,—that the body of Jesus, after he had lain dead in the tomb for three days, was restored to physical life. They believed that he came back out of the tomb as he had gone into it, that his very bone, blood and sinew were restored, and that for a few weeks he was among his friends just as he had been before.

The disciples found the proof of his resurrection in the nail prints and the sword thrust. They measured the soul of Jesus by the body. On this doctrine rests the older theory of the coming resurrection of the dead,—that some day there will be a calling out of the bodies of the dead, that the actual flesh will be restored, and that the resurrected bodies will enter into the delights of a material heaven.

Many millions of people have rested their faith in immortality upon this idea. They have found comfort and salvation in it. He would be cruel who, without adequate reason, would seek to take away this belief from those who find it satisfying and can find no better basis of faith.

Unfortunately perhaps, there are many people today who find no comfort in this belief. They do not find the proofs of the resurrection stories adequate, and they do not find in these stories, if they were true,

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any support of the conception of a spiritual resurrection which Paul so clearly presents in his letter to the Corinthians. Finding no other evidence of immortality and finding no interpretation of the resurrection stories that satisfies them, they are inclined to reject the whole idea of life after death. It may be that if the church had not insisted so strongly upon the doctrine of bodily resurrection the better interpretation would have been found and many of those who have lost their faith would have held it.

It may be admitted that God could have brought the body of Jesus back to life if there had been any reason for it. Perhaps the disciples could not be held in their loyalty without it. They were not philosophers. It may be that they could not have believed in a living Christ without the nail prints. There seem to be many today who cannot believe without the nail prints. If the actual body of Jesus was restored that fact would demonstrate nothing to the thinking mind except that the body is immortal. It would simply mean that the restored physical world of the apocalyptic vision is to become a reality. It would have no spiritual meaning.

This idea does not prove satisfying to the modern mind. If immortality means nothing more than the continuance of the physical life it has little meaning to those who are seeking the spiritual realities. If the life that is to be is not the consummation

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of a dream and a hope, if it is not the attainment of a marvelous spiritual life, then life had about as well end with the grave and have done with it.

There is another interpretation of the resurrection stories which may have value to those who are doubtful and questioning. It may bring comfort to those who have found no comfort in the old ideas.

It is necessary to assume for the purposes of this discussion that the whole story of the resurrection is merely tradition. This tradition arose and was written into the biography of Jesus as a result of the irresistible conviction held by the disciples that Jesus was still with them. This conviction might very easily have existed without the actual physical presence of Jesus.

These men and women who had walked with Jesus for three years had souls that were peculiarly sensitive to spiritual impressions. There are people today of this type, mystics, to whom spiritual values take on the reality of physical values. The living soul of Jesus revealed itself to these spiritually sensitive persons. He became as real to them as when he walked with them upon the dusty plains of Palestine. They seemed to see him as they had seen him upon the cross, with nail-pierced hands and bleeding side. The print of the nails they seemed to touch. They talked of him in the terms of a living Christ. With their responsive minds they reconstructed his body from

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the spiritual elements which he revealed to them. They brought Jesus to his resurrection and many years later the story was put into the terms of physical life.

Some such impression of the actual presence of Christ after Calvary was essential at the time, to the perpetuation of Christianity. If it had not prevailed it is altogether possible that the religion of Jesus would have died on the cross. A living Christ was then and is now the basis of our faith.

If we can accept these resurrection stories as beautiful traditions, growing out of the matchless love of the disciples for the master, if they can stand for us as symbols of a spiritual and not as the history of a physical resurrection we should still be able to find the living Christ. This conception should lift the whole thought of immortality to a higher plane. It should recover the resurrection idea from materialism.

If we are immortal at all we are immortal in an element of our being which has little direct relationship to our bodies. If we have souls the soul is a separate entity. It is not dependent upon the body. The body is simply the instrument of the soul.

There is no question that our bodies die and dissolve away. The moldering ashes of Moses and David and Isaiah have for the long centuries mingled with the sands of the desert. But the great lawgiver,

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the great poet, the great preacher are not wafted about by every vagrant breeze. So far as they are immortal they are utterly separated from the physical instrument of their short life on earth. There is no value in restoring the body. Bringing them back to the physical would be bringing them back to prison. This kind of resurrection would not be a restoration to life but to death.

Is it not a much better and more comforting conception that the actual resurrection takes place at what we call death? The soul, the personality, the reality that is man, enters at death into a new phase of life. It would be bitter cruelty to restore the old relationship of soul and body.

Immortality does not begin at death. It will not begin upon a resurrection day. It began when life began. The soul does not begin when the body dissolves to dust. It is simply then set free to the enjoyment of new liberty, new knowledge, new power of expression, new comprehension of itself.

The resurrection is not an isolated experience. It is a stage in the growth of the soul. It is not a restoration, but a progression. It is an emergence into a new life. Immortality is not something bestowed by a special act at a special time. The great judgment morning is a cruel fiction. The judgment morning is every morning. Every day is a resurrection day, and the greatest resurrection day of all is

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when the habiliments of flesh are laid aside and we all go out into a new stage of life.

The resurrection is an evolution, a growth, a development. It has been such for the race. The soul of the Neanderthal man was a mere embryo compared with the soul of a Paul. The common soul of humanity today is far nearer the divine measure that was the common soul of humanity ten thousand years ago.

What is true of the race is true of the individual. The only death which actually destroys is the death of the soul. When the soul refuses to grow or is unable to grow because of circumstances it dies and that is death indeed. It is no mere jocular idea that there are many people walking about who are dead. Many of these have superb bodies. But in them the growth of life has ceased. There has been no resurrection and there may never be.

The normal experience is not this. For the average person the soul grows day by day. In spite of the trammels of the body the soul develops new power, new insight, new vision, new ranges of expression, and when death comes the soul goes out into a free life, to realize the full meaning of the years of struggle in the flesh. And it matters not how few or how many those years may be. It only matters that during them the personality shall be shaped toward the divine plan.

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This evolution of the soul is evident in the life of Jesus. The Christ of Calvary was a greater Christ than the Christ of Cana of Galilee. Jesus made every day a resurrection to new life. His great resurrection was not from the tomb, it was from the cross. When he said, "It is finished" he did not imply that the end of life had come. He did mean that the end of a phase of life had come and that he was to shake off the shackles of mortality. His last, expiring breath upon the tree marked the beginning of a larger, freer life, and nothing could be added to its power or its meaning by resuming for a time the use of the timent of clay which was laid in the tomb.

If God is a spirit and man is a spirit there is nothing of value in the tradition of the resurrection, except as a symbol. If man is not a spirit the idea of immortality is a grim and tragic joke. Resurrection to life is simply stepping over the threshold into the measureless life of God. The life everlasting is here and now and ever will be. It does not depend upon a restored body. It only depends upon a growing soul.



## CHAPTER X

### What the Creed-Makers Forgot

The creators of the creeds seem to have been much like the Pharisees, who drew down the condemnation of Jesus. In the attempt to define the boundaries of religion they were meticulously careful to set speculative doctrines in line with the knowledge and philosophy of their day, but they overlooked the fundamental fact that religion is a life. They placed all the emphasis upon the necessity of thinking a certain way, and gave no heed to the matter of feeling a certain way and acting a certain way. The creed-makers of today seem to be perpetuating the error. As a matter of fact, what the creed-makers forgot, not what they included, forms the foundation of all religion, whether Christian or Jewish or Mohammedan or Buddhist or what.

This does not mean that it is unimportant whether men believe anything, or what they believe. The first suggestion in this discussion was that a positive belief is the star by which all human conduct must be guided. Actions are the product of motives, and motives rest back upon beliefs, upon intellectual

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conceptions. Whoever does not believe in God is not likely to be actuated by the highest motives unless he finds some other belief which brings lofty purposes. He must believe in something splendidly worthy, he must love something that inspires, else he will live on a low plane. No one toils over the high roads of life who does not believe that beyond the summit is God and good.

There must be for each of us a personal creed. If it is a religious creed it must include a belief in God. That is enough as a beginning, but as we strive to know God our lives will be shaped somewhat by what we believe about him. If our God is only a superman our Godward striving will be on the human plane. If we can somehow find a God of eternal purposes who has a vision of a family of his sons and daughters living in a good world and coming into his likeness, we shall find ourselves growing out into something of this conception of life. A God who has toiled and struggled and suffered in the creation of a universe, the crowning product of which is a great company of divine beings, is a great God, and worthy to be worshipped and loved. And when that God gives a pattern for human life there is inspiration in the effort to follow the pattern.

A belief in that sort of God is implied in the creed, which declares him to be not only the creator of heaven and earth, but the father almighty. How

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he created the heavens and the earth is of the least importance, and if two records of that creation differ the child of God should be allowed to choose that which to him bears the marks of truth. There are very many people today who believe that God wrote the story of creation in the universe itself. Believing this, and looking upon the written record as traditions born in the simple minds of a primitive people in the early years of human history, they find the God revealed to them to be a greater God than the God of Genesis. But they believe in God, or they would believe if the creed interpreters would let them. It is only in the all-too common interpretation of the creed that unbelief is encouraged. No one need refuse to say, "I believe in God, the father almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

Nor is there any need of hesitancy in accepting the declaration, "I believe in Jesus Christ, his son, our Lord." Even though many of the statements about Jesus may be nothing more than beautiful poetry, the great fact remains that he stands as a unique figure, the son of God, the demonstration that the divine soul may become incarnate in humanity. Because God was in Christ, revealing himself to the world through that fine personality, Christ becomes the lord of life. Because he was divine we may become divine, and the proof of his divinity lies in his life, not in any miracle of his birth which would

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make his life inaccessible to man. He is our lord because we may be like him, and may open our lives to the divine indwelling as he did.

We must believe, if we have gone so far, in an imminent God. We must believe in what we may call the holy ghost, if we know what we mean by that. The God who created us is yearning for companionship with us. His spirit is seeking constantly to hold communion with the free spirits of his children. If our lives are in tune with the infinite we may hear God and see him in the beauty and order of the universe, in the operation of cosmic law, in the manifest divinity of human life, in the still small voice that will speak to the open soul.

Our belief may go further. We may believe in an organized community of those who are seeking to know God. We need not, we must not believe that the boundaries of that community are created by any statement of dogma. The communion of saints has nothing to do with sects and formulated creeds. It is, or should be, a community of those who are seeking to know the truth, to understand the mind of God, to live in accordance with divine motives. Denominational names have no meaning in such a communion of the saints.

If we have gone thus far in formulating for ourselves a body of belief we may readily go a little further. We may assume that the God of love will not

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admit himself defeated in his purpose to make his children like himself. His love will follow them in all errors and inadequacies and sins, and he will redeem them, not because they sign a creed, but because divine love can never let go. He will follow them into the eternities. The personalities which have come into being will not die. They will live. They will live in the greater freedom of the spiritual realm where God dwells. They will not be restored to bodily form, but will be set free in a resurrection to full life, from the hampering shackles of this life. We may not believe in the resurrection of the body, but if we believe in God we must believe in the resurrection to life.

This is all the creed that anyone needs, if he is to acknowledge himself a child of God. It is not even necessary, if we are to follow Jesus Christ, to formulate this very definitely or to shape it into any statement of belief. Jesus did not. It is only necessary that we act upon it. This brings us to what the creed-makers forgot. They stopped at just the point where any creed may have practical value in human life. The only creed that is of any value is a creed that may be lived.

Before Jesus came Micah had formulated such a creed: "What doth the lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" When Jesus came he formulated such a

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creed: "Thou shalt love the lord thy God with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The actual living of these commandments implies the acceptance of all that it is fundamental to believe. No one loves his neighbor who does not love God, whether he has stated his belief in words or not. No one loves God who does not love his neighbor, regardless of how many words he may mumble in his creed. No one loves God who does not believe in him, and no one believes in Jesus who does not manifest his spirit.

Micah and Jesus have set forth a simple, working creed for human life. In all his teachings Jesus insists on only one thing, that men shall live in accordance with the two great commandments, and when they do that they have fulfilled the law, they have done what is more acceptable to God than sacrifices or ritual or ceremonial. In fact no creed is of any value unless it may be stated in terms of the cup of cold water given in the spirit of Christ, because of the love of God.

The simple creed of Jesus, however, is not as simple in its application to life as the statement of it would seem to indicate. Each of the commandments involves implications which touch every element of life. It is not necessary to go into all of these in this discussion, beyond suggesting what they may be.

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Loving God with the whole life means something more than a perfunctory affection directed toward a somewhat intangible being conceived in the mind. It means knowing God. There is no love without knowledge. Love is not an abstract thing that exists without an object. A mother does not love the mere idea of a child. She only loves a child born in the anguish of her soul, whose every slightest whim she understands, whose every slightest desire she seeks to fulfill or to change to a better desire.

We may know God by keeping mind and soul open. To know him we must worship. Here is the great value of the church. It is the place where we are led to seek God. To know God we must open the mind and soul to every manifestation of him. The flowers tell of him. The trees tell of him. The illimitable sky tells of him. The voice of the inspired poet tells of him. Every good impulse that presents itself tells of him. The joys of life tell of him. The pains and suffering tell of him. The knowledge of God is too great for us, because his revelation of himself transcends human power to understand, but the more we know of him the better we love him.

Love of God involves shaping the life in accordance with his will so far as we can know that will. It means keeping the body in the best possible health. It means keeping a clean mind and a pure heart. It means constant growth of mind. No one loves God

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who shuts his mind against truth, for he is a God of truth.

This matter of love of God is an individual, personal concern. It is something sacred, between a man and his maker. It must involve prayer, but formal, public prayer has little place in establishing the relationship of mutual love and understanding between God and his child. The prayer upon the corner of the street is something akin to blasphemy. Real prayer is a sacred function, a real sacrament. If it does not become this no form of words can have any great meaning.

Loving God with the whole heart cannot be a matter of rules. No one can define for another how he must live in order to love God, nor what sacrifices he must make.

While love of God cannot be created by any activity, by any religious exercise, it is certain to express itself in very definite ways in life. Love of God will create love of one's neighbor. This will bring about some very positive activities. If these are not found in the life it is fairly certain that love of God and love of neighbor are alike non-existent.

No one loves God who has not found the way to give the cup of cold water in his name. This means something far more than a perfunctory charity. We seem very largely in the past to have failed to sense the meaning of the cup of cold water. We



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have not seen the thirsty Christ, the hungry Christ. We have sent up a formal protestation of love and friendship for God, and have handed out a reluctant dole to some of God's children, never putting our life into the common stream of human life. We do not see that we are mocking God when we try to buy his favor by creed or ritual while there is no touch of hand to hand and heart to heart.

This misapprehension of the meaning of love is responsible for most of the miseries of life. Here is war. What a hideous misinterpretation of the divine purpose for human life! A few years ago we declared war on Germany. We were justified in it according to the accepted standards. We like to feel that our motives were clear, and undoubtedly most of those who had any part in it were under the spell of a splendid ideal. But hate was back of it all, and hate was the product of it all. The goal of human brotherhood was pushed far back, and nations are glowering at each other today. Can it be that after all these years we have not come any nearer to an understanding of the love of God?

We devise peace plans and create leagues and covenants and treaties to end war. These must come, perhaps, but this monstrous thing will never cease to be until we have learned to translate the love of God into human relationships. When that has

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come the needed machinery for conducting those relationships will easily follow.

The world will never learn the meaning of brotherhood until the church becomes Christian. At the present it is less a communion than a corral. Its ministers are not permitted to be leaders of the minds and souls of those who come for light and leadership. They are doorkeepers. They are expected to stand at the gateway and wait for the credal pass-word. They hold the bludgeon of a sacrament or a creed to drive out all who will not stultify mind and soul to the measure of a statement of faith. They are not allowed to stand with open arms to welcome all who seek to know God and to meet him.

Statistics of the churches have to do with the number who have subscribed to this or that formula of faith. This year one denomination leads, next year another, and all the time the world is filled with hungry souls to whom we are not ministering because the church is exclusive, not inclusive.

The minister is expected to add numbers to the church roll. The success of his ministry is measured by the length of the list of contributors. If the church were a real fellowship no church roll would be the measure of its size. It would include all who had been touched helpfully by its ministry. The minister must be more than a sentry at the gate. He must be a messenger of love to the whole community,

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and no church which is a real brotherhood of the spirit can measure its reach by an array of figures. It matters not how many names may be reported in the year-book, if only there is more of the love of God, expressing itself in loving service, as a result of the ministry of the church.

William Norris Burr writes of "God's Dream:"

"The man's a dreamer!" Good. That places him  
In close relationship with God. For down  
In the most wretched quarter of the town  
God stands and dreams his dream; amid the grim  
Ensanguined battle wreckage, in the dim  
Cold twilights where old superstitions frown;  
And where the mutterings of race hatred drown  
The sacred cadences of Love's fond hymn.

Today I met him on an uptown street  
Calling for dreamers,—pleading in the heat  
Of holy passion for more dream-swept hearts,  
To hold in all the world's discordant parts  
The torch of brotherhood, that its love-gleam  
Might speed the progress of his gracious dream.

God never dreamed a dream of humanity torn asunder by greed and selfishness and hatred. He never dreamed a dream of a world that could go to war. He never dreamed a dream of his children bear-

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ing the name of his chosen son, and setting up walls of exclusiveness, shutting out all heretics however Christlike their lives might be. His dream is a dream of love, of brotherhood, and until we measureably appreciate this no amount of credal correctness can save our souls.

In Browning's Saul are these lines:

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine  
    song, when hand  
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good-fellowship and  
    great hearts expand  
And grow one in the sense of this world's life.

The creed-makers forgot this greatness of love, this comradeship of soul, with which the sense of human brotherhood expands hearts until they grow into a unity of divine purpose and divine love. The only creed that can regenerate the world is that simple creed of the master, which some day must live in the soul of humanity.







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